

BUILD BACK BETTER
THE SELF-MADE CITIES

Actions for Formalizing Informal Constructions & Improving the
Geospatial Ecosystems, Land Tools & Land Policies

18-22 JUNE 2025
ATHENS & SANTORINI, GREECE

Joint UNECE WPLA & REM, FIG Com3 & Com9, EGoS, WB Conference, 18-22 June 2025, Athens & Santorini

FORMALIZATION OF INFORMAL CONSTRUCTIONS IN CHIȘINĂU

PROGRESS, CHALLENGES, AND STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS



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The Current State of Informal Construction

Affected Areas

Peri-urban areas

Inner-city neighborhoods

Green/public lands



It's estimated that 15 -20% of individual houses in peri-urban areas have been built without permits. In some suburbs, this may exceed 30%



15-20%



Informal dwellings



Unauthorized extensions, additions, etc.

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The Current State of Informal Construction

Single-family homes in peri-urban areas

Built without permits, often on unclear/agricultural land, lacking utilities and infrastructure.

Unauthorized extensions in the city

Balcony enclosures, attic conversions, ground-floor additions, affecting safety and aesthetics.

Unsafe internal reconfigurations

Changes harming structural elements like beams or walls, risking building stability.

Construction on disputed land

Built on plots with unclear ownership or legal claims, hard to legalize later.

Multi-unit housing with missing documents

Blocks built during 2000s boom without full permits, causing registration and utility problems.



Ambiguous property rights and unclear land status.

Outdated urban planning documents, lacking strategic vision.

Limited administrative capacity and weak enforcement.

Frequent legal gaps and unclear regularization policies.

Social necessity due to lack of affordable housing.

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Institutional Response

(Partially) Implemented Strategies

- **General Urban Plan Review** to reflect current realities and **Detailed Urban Plans** for neighborhoods with many unauthorized buildings.
- Establishment of “**Regularization Zones**” where informal buildings can be preserved and legalized.
- Legalization of buildings built without permits in the **Urban Planning Code (2025)**
- **Public Awareness Campaigns** targeting residents and construction professionals.



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Ongoing Challenges



Bureaucratic Complexity

Lengthy, unclear procedures discourage residents from legalizing buildings.

Legal Ambiguity

Many structures are built on land with unclear legal status; resolving ownership is slow and difficult.

Inconsistent Administrative Response

Authorities alternate between strict enforcement and inaction, weakening trust and rule of law.

Weak Enforcement of Existing Laws

Penalties and demolition orders exist but are rarely applied; informality becomes normalized.

Rigid and Fragmented Legal Framework

Laws are strict but lack realistic remedies for past violations, especially for vulnerable populations.

Implementation Gaps in the New Urban Code

Despite positive reforms, the new Code lacks harmonized regulations and operational capacity for real impact.

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Strategies for Legal & Equitable Urbanization

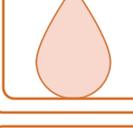
Integrated approach

-  **Clarify property rights** through cadastral updates & digital records
-  **Reform urban planning laws & update** General/Zonal Plans
-  **Support vulnerable groups** via social housing, loans, and guidance
-  **Strengthen public institutions** and engage communities in planning

Key Objectives

-  **Stop chaotic changes** to apartment blocks (annexes, re-planning)
-  **Control illegal use** of infrastructure networks (water, electricity)
-  **Protect public land** from unauthorized construction
-  **Define fair regularization & sanctioning** procedures

Public Investments

-  **Extend utilities** in informal areas
-  **Improve sanitation & waste collection**
-  **Build roads & access** to services
-  **Create kindergartens & public spaces**
-  **Digitalize maps & infrastructure data** for better planning

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Applying UNECE Guidelines in Chişinău

Gradual, inclusive formalization

Right to adequate housing

Community engagement & integrated urban services

UNECE principles

Translate & adapt UNECE Guidelines to national framework

Create coordination body for cross-sector action

Define minimum service & housing standards for prioritization

Attract international funding for pilots (e.g. EU, UN)

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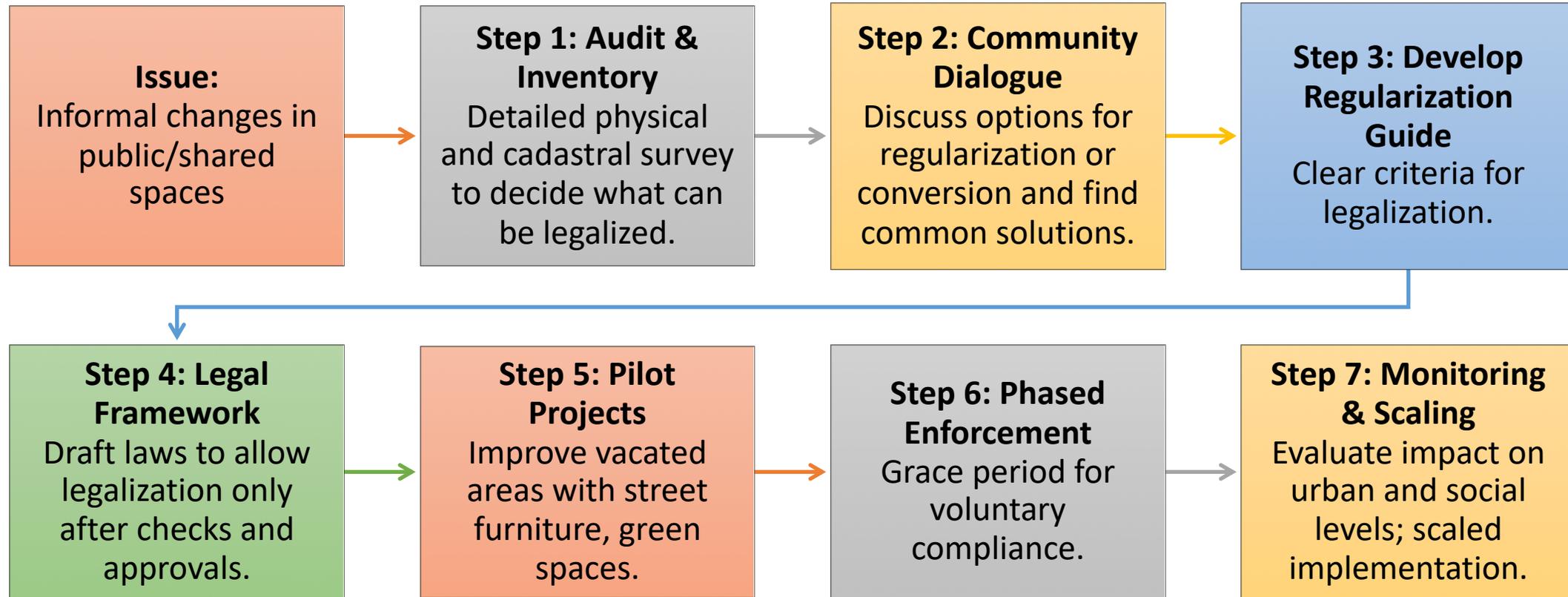


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Proposed Intervention Model for Regularization



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Practical Example: Illegally Built Attic in Durlești

Regulatory Context:

- Initial permit refused due to proximity to power lines
- Attic not in original approved project (only metal tile roof)
- Built with flammable materials and wooden beams instead of reinforced concrete
- Courts forced municipality to grant permits despite technical objections
- Municipality did not participate in final building reception, creating responsibility gaps



Issues

- Lack of systematic post-construction monitoring or inspections
- Courts lack technical expertise, causing unsafe permits under judicial pressure
- Poor coordination among designers, authorities, inspectors, and judiciary

Lessons

- Need for stronger, integrated monitoring and inspection systems
- Technical reviews for court rulings in urban planning cases
- Public registries for unauthorized building modifications
- Formalization as a strategic process—not just retroactive legalization

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Takeaway messages

Informal construction in Chişinău reflects systemic challenges—legal gaps, administrative weaknesses, and social housing pressure—resulting in urban fragmentation, safety risks, and public distrust.

Passive tolerance must be replaced with responsible, coordinated action, supported by a transparent and predictable legal framework that enables both enforcement and fair regularization.

Integrated solutions are essential, combining urban planning reform, protection of public assets, social housing measures, and active community involvement.

Strengthening institutional capacity and investing in public infrastructure are key to preventing marginalization and ensuring equitable urban development.

Aligning with international frameworks (e.g. UNECE guidelines) offers a pathway to gradually and responsibly transform informal development into an opportunity for inclusive urban reconstruction.

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Thank you for your attention!



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